



THREE CIRCLE STUDENT EMPOWERMENT MODEL FOR RURAL COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In the past decades, rural Indian adolescents preferred jobs after completing their secondary schooling; however, today digital natives look for college degrees rather than a job. This positive trend in turn has paved the way for an adverse situation in which increased number of unmotivated, unfocused student force entering into institutes of higher education. Added to that, the mushrooming higher education institutions have made the traditional altruistic educational sector in India into a major business arena limiting the quality of input and output. Many educational institutions limit themselves to mere lesson oriented classroom lectures and fail to focus on the outcomes based education. In view of empowering the rural students for holistic development, wellbeing and mental health, the author prepares an Empowerment Program named Three Circle Model (3-C Model). This study gives rationale for this model and evaluates the efficiency of this model.

KEYWORDS: Higher education, student empowerment, rural college students, holistic development.

Introduction:

Adolescence is a period of critical importance in human development. Many psychologists consider it as a period of quarter-life transition (childhood to adulthood) and sometimes a period of crisis too. Erikson (1968) emphasises identity creation as the major developmental task in this period and, many psychologists talk about "identity crisis" in this period. The foremost impact in the identity creation and the major player in the process are peers and their association. It is a period of confusion, excitement and crisis because adolescents make a clean break from childhood to form an identity of their own (Janetius & Mini, 2015 & Shilpa, 2012). Adolescence is also a period of developing future concerns, serious life decision making and they are sidetracked by various interruptions (Mini, 2011). It is required of the young individuals to create identity in this period; otherwise, confusion disturbs their life (Erikson, 1968 & 1970). Therefore, the need for directing them to holistic development arises.

Today, a majority of the adolescents are addicted to the internet, social sites like facebook and the like. Other than this, there is a peer pressure for alcohol use, tobacco use, sex abuse, gang involvements and other anti-social activities, which increase dramatically. The effect of global and digital technological culture has made life easier for the rural students to be easy to prey to the glamour of movie and sports personalities. The absence of parental supervision and the growing broken and divorced families and its consequences has an adverse effect in the life of adolescents. The parental aspirations for wealth creation at the cost of neglecting parental guidance create a vacuum in identity creation without proper role models at home. Added to that, the hostile teachers today in the college campus too, contribute a lot for the deviant behaviours in college campuses (Janetius, 2013). Well-defined, goal-oriented initiatives to empower them in the correct direction can avert and give focus to their wavering minds in academic pursuits and well-desired goal oriented life. Otherwise, they develop with lack of communication skills, low self-esteem, poor self-confidence and self-defeating mentality that create a vacuum in them leading to anger, often displaced towards the college and the teaching staff.

Student empowerment is one of the primary intentions to help students gain the confidence, experience, and skills necessary to become leaders as they meet the challenges of an ever-changing world. Together with families and parents, the educational institutions play a substantial supporting role during the adolescent period to understand the various choices young people confront daily, help them communicate their choices, and ultimately guiding them in their decisions making powers. Empowerment is therefore aimed at helping students to make their own decisions and to be responsible for those decisions. The student empowerment programs are needed to help students acquire skills to improve communication, confidence, motivation and interpersonal skills to reach his or her greatest potential. The students discover various life skills that help them blossom into secure, confident young adults thus find opportunity for self-discovery, interpersonal relations, personal and professional growth. The students can be helped to achieve this by encouraging them to work together, practice using their social skills, and develop their own leadership qualities (Karten, 2005). Based on the commonly identified problems of the rural students in this digital era, this study focuses on creating an empowerment model for rural college students.

Methodology:

The study uses the results from two previous studies done by the author. The first exploratory study was conducted using data from 250 college teachers and 1350

under graduate students from six colleges in the state of Tamil Nadu. The second study was conducted in two southern states of India, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, using case study and survey methods. 524 secondary school students (248 boys and 276 girls) and 148 parents (85 fathers and 63 mothers) were surveyed. Besides these, data from five case studies of college students who completed their degrees or dropouts from various streams, who were counselled by the primary investigator, were also used for descriptive analysis.

Results:

The first study has identified six kinds of college students, namely: a) fully focused and full success, b) fully focused and some success, c) try to be focused for some success, d) try to be focused and no success, e) not focused yet some success, and, f) not focused and no success. As per the study, majority of the students fall in to the category of 'Not focused' revealing a major percentage of 'unmotivated student force'.

The second study identifies the following common trends among students and parents: a) the students are not helped to plan for their future based on their aptitude and interest either in the schools or by parents; b) the academic choice and course selection in the higher education are influenced to a greater extent by parents or teachers who are ill-equipped to guide the students in their higher studies and professional growth; c) direct and indirect forceful imposition of parental choices is often noticed; d) the parents as well as students are attracted by the easy job opportunities, high salary and the imaginary social status in choosing specific jobs; e) majority of students opt for any job irrespective of their specific field of study; f) students, parents and those who guide the students are often carried away by mass media and popular trends in the society rather than evaluating the student's potentials for a right career.

Rationale for the program:

The goal of education is the focus on the students' growth as holistic. Therefore, various classroom activities should focus not only on academic and the related learning modules rather it should be a fine combination of intellectual, emotional, psychological and spiritual growth of the students. This paradigm will help the students recognize the relevance of learning in their lives as well as their future career and achieving life goals. A three-step paradigm is followed as rationale for creating an empowerment model for students.

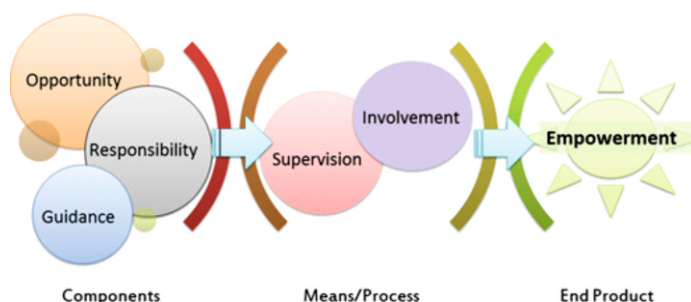


Figure One: Rationale for 3-C Model

Three Circle Student Empowerment Program (3-C Model): The whole classroom will be divided into five pre-defined action oriented groups with five input components; each group lead by a student leader. The model is called three-circle model because the student development will be continuously monitored in three circles and enhanced.

1. Academic Group: This group aims at the academic development of students. The focus areas are: monitor the level of learning and understanding, motivate and help the slow learners and help the defaulters to clear the arrears. A student with self-discipline and a commanding character should lead the group.

2. Discipline Group: the group will monitor the overall classroom discipline, punctuality, absenteeism, good manners, etiquette etc. The focus areas are: motivate the students to be punctual for class and in submitting assignments, advocate decent dress code and decorum in the classroom and reduce untoward incidents in the campus. A student with a strong leadership quality should head this group.

3. Association and Skills Development Group: This group encourages extra-curricular activities, skills development and other talents development by approaching and coordinating with different faculty and departments. The focus areas are: arrange student seminars on various useful topics, arrange resource persons for associations/guest lectures, encourage students for various extra-curricular activities and competition participation.

4. Peer Counsellors & Dialogue Group: Identifying problem students and helping in their overall welfare and mental health is the task of this group. The focus areas are: visit the Counselling Centre and coordinate activities regularly to make the campus a place of wellbeing and learning, report and direct anti-social students for counselling. A student with cordial relationship and helping tendency should lead this group

5. Current Affairs & General Knowledge Group: This group provides the classroom with regular input on current affairs, social happenings, and matters related to the field of study, and improve the general knowledge of the students by regular newspaper and library updates.

and parcel of adolescent's normal growth and development. The rural student population in particular fail to kindle their potentials for a bright future. The proposed empowerment model can help the adolescents in the critical period of confusion and excitement and make them more productive in their personal and professional growth.

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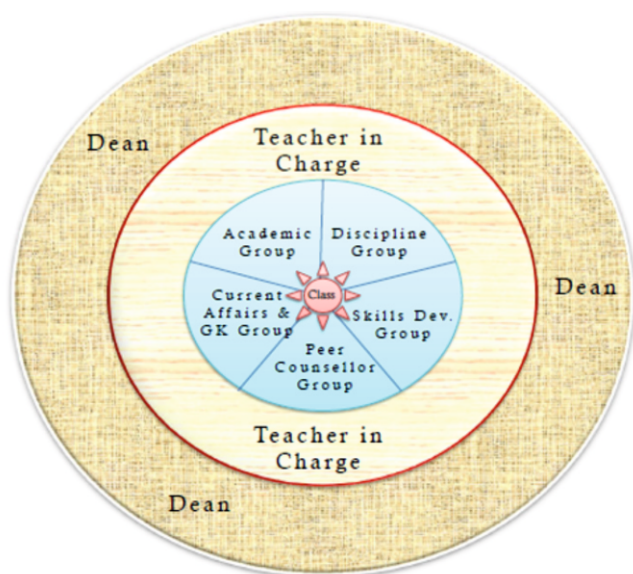


Figure Two: Three Circle Model Student Empowerment Model

In the core level circle, the particular group monitors the student development. In the second level circle, the Monitoring Class teacher (teacher in Charge) will monitor the activities of the groups. Each group is given a logbook to note down the activities and it is checked regularly by the outer circles. In the final circle, the Dean will monitor the whole program.

Guidelines for monitoring system:

The monitoring or coordinating teachers play a vital role in the success and failure of the program in the classroom. Therefore, a teacher who is appointed as coordinator in the first year, move on with the students until they graduate. The change of coordinating teachers every semester affects the smooth running of the program. In addition, the selection of good student leaders is necessary for the success of the program. It is recommended that the coordinating staff meet the student leaders once in a week for discussions and check their logbooks. Student leaders, together with the coordinators meet the Dean two times in a semester (beginning & end of the semester) to discuss strategies and evaluation.

Conclusion:

In this digital era, the college students who are in a critical transition period of moving from adolescence to adulthood face a lot of adjustment issues, academic problems, personal development concerns, interpersonal conflicts which are part